

# Yes should be the only option for Halifax

GUEST COLUMN

Thu. Dec 13 - 6:25 AM

HAS ANYONE been paying attention to the demographic shifts lately? Our population is aging. We're having fewer kids than ever before. And the latest migration numbers are just plain depressing.

According to recently released Statistics Canada figures, Halifax lost 2,380 people in 2005-06 alone.

So what's the problem?

Could it be that we are doing a less than adequate job of marketing Halifax as a "destination of choice?" Are we so focused on what does not seem possible that we automatically say no to things new and different?

There has been a lot of talk of late about the "Halifax attitude." The examples abound. We didn't want Sunday shopping. We didn't want the Commonwealth Games. We don't want tall modern buildings anywhere in the vicinity of our treasured heritage properties. We don't want Halifax to be like Toronto. And lest we forget, the most recent debacle with Celine Dion, which made national headlines because we weren't welcoming one of our own fellow Canadians.

All defined by "No thanks, not yet."

When you think about it, using the word "yes" is much more challenging. Why? Because at the point of saying yes, you must be prepared to create, to think beyond what exists, to imagine what is possible and to take action to turn concept into reality.

FUSION Halifax, a new organization that aims to capture the voice and spirit of the next generation, can be counted in the growing number of people in this community who are tired of hearing what we "don't want, can't do and aren't ready for." On Oct. 25, over 300 people attended the official launch of FUSION Halifax. Everyone who turned out was asked to write on a massive "dream wall" what they envision as the future of this city. In their words, their city is:

- A Halifax that offers a wide variety of career options at competitive salaries, giving people the true choice to build lives and careers here;
- A Halifax that is proud of its heritage, works hard to preserve it and also encourages investment and development;
- A Halifax in which families of all income levels can live and work near the downtown core, if they choose to;
- A Halifax that puts a high priority on effective public transportation by considering commuters who cycle or walk to be as important as drivers of single-occupant vehicles;
- A Halifax that is welcoming, open and celebrates diversity

- A Halifax that invites young people to take leadership roles in the community;
- A Halifax where business, innovation and investment are supported by leading-edge public policy and economic development;

In our city, there is much to celebrate. As the next generation, we recognize and cherish our assets and we are not afraid to use them in efforts to make this city better.

But it's hard to see so many of our friends, relatives and colleagues leave for other places, opportunities and competitive salaries.

We want this city to be a destination of choice and not a compromise. We want those friends and colleagues back here and newcomers to choose this as their home.

Possibly most of all, we all want a Halifax that believes and invests in itself and its people.

And that means erasing the word "no" from our vocabulary and accepting the challenge of saying, "It's time to try."

FUSION Halifax members believe that collectively, we can be anything we want to be. It's about imagining the possible, being committed and embracing the right attitude.

We have the right people. We have the right place. We have the right sense of pride. And by believing in what can be done, together, we will have the right sort of progress required to take Halifax into the future.

It's officially time to say goodbye to no, Halifax. It won't be easy, but having a yes attitude is the only way to take our city where we need it to go.

As our tagline says, it's time to inspire tomorrow today.

The writing is on the wall. We can't afford not to.

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